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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet chronicles the study of Kirsty Arrondelle, an 11-year-old girl with Down's Syndrome, focusing on her attendance at a local infants school in Berkshire (England), her later acceptance at a primary school in Hertfordshire, and her preparation for transfer to secondary school. It details the struggle of Kirsty's parents to have her mainstreamed in ordinary schools, in their belief that her special educational needs should not be seen as separate from her personal and social needs. Discussed are Kirsty's special educational programming; the resources allocated for her special needs by the local education authorities; the lengthy process required for formal assessment of her special educational needs as provided for in the 1981 Education Act; and opinions and attitudes of her teachers, other education professionals, and local school authorities. (JDD)

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Like Other Children

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The primary school education of a girl with Down's Syndrome, KIRSTY ARRONDELLE.

BY
LIZ ALLEN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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Like Other Children

THE CENTRE FOR STUDIES
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Introduction

Every morning before her parents come downstairs, Kirsty Arrondelle lays out the breakfast things; her father's favourite yoghurt and his orange juice, cereal bowls and spoons. If it is a weekend she will play with the family's two cheerful golden retrievers or read aloud to herself from one of her favourite books before the neighbourhood wakes up and the stream of children in and out of the house begins. If it is a weekday, she will set off with her mother for the local primary school.

Kirsty, now 11 years old, has just moved into the top juniors for her last year at primary school in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire where she will prepare for transfer for secondary school alongside all her other classmates. Kirsty's parents hope that transfer will be to the nearest mixed comprehensive — a Catholic school with 700 children on roll. They have chosen it because it offers the most appropriate learning environment for their daughter.

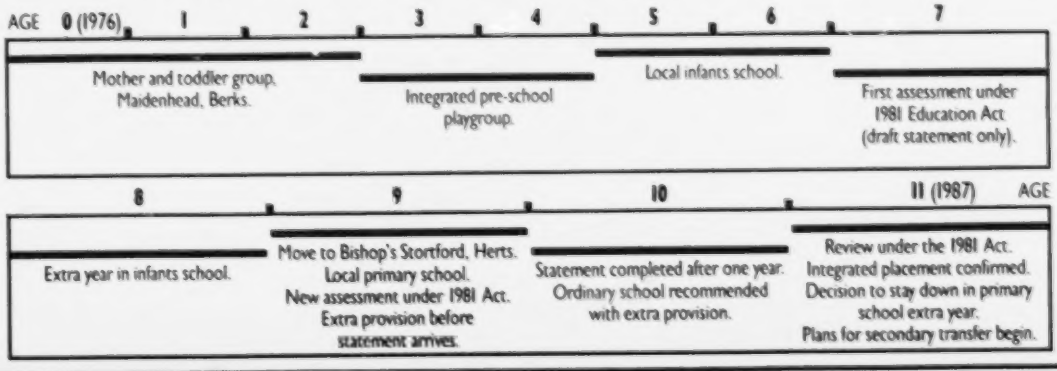
Children with Down's Syndrome like Kirsty have special educational needs. But these educational needs, say her parents, should not be seen as separate from her personal and social needs, needs which are best met in ordinary local schools. At every stage in her school career — nursery, infant and junior school — Kirsty has attended an ordinary local school. Her secondary schooling, say her parents, should be no different.

The 1981 Education Act, a major reform in the education of children with special educational needs, imposes a duty on local education authorities (LEAs) to educate children with special educational needs in ordinary schools provided that account has been taken of parents' views and education in an ordinary school is compatible with:

- the child receiving the special educational provision which s/he requires
- the provision of 'efficient education' for children with whom s/he wiill be educated and
- the efficient use of resources.

Kirsty first started school aged five in September 1981, before the Act was implemented in April 1983. She is one of the first generation of children to test its effectiveness and the response by LEAs. □

Kirsty's Time-Chart Born March 18, 1976


AGE 0 (1976) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Mother and toddler group. Maidenhead, Berks.
Integrated pre-school playgroup.
Local infants school.
First assessment under 1981 Education Act (draft statement only).
8 9 10 11 (1987) AGE
Extra year in infants school.
Move to Bishop's Stortford, Herts. Local primary school. New assessment under 1981 Act. Extra provision before statement arrives.
Statement completed after one year. Ordinary school recommended with extra provision.
Review under the 1981 Act. Integrated placement confirmed. Decision to stay down in primary school extra year. Plans for secondary transfer begin.

1 Laying the foundations

Kirsty had experienced a happy integrated pre-school childhood in the local community from three to five, and the most natural progression from her playgroup, once she was of school age, was to send her to the local infants school. From the beginning her parents faced pressure from their old LEA (Berkshire) to place Kirsty in a special school for children then classified as ESN(S) — educationally sub-normal (severe).

It was unheard of, warned the Health Authority's Medical Officer, for children like Kirsty to move from nursery to mainstream infant school. Her parents argued that it was the only way forward. A special school environment would be completely regressive for Kirsty who needed the model of her neighbourhood children around her.

The headteacher of the local Church of England infants school was persuaded by their arguments, and agreed to take Kirsty on a term by term basis. (See CSIE's earlier factsheet, *Kirsty — the struggle for a place in an ordinary school*, and *A parent's story* in CSIE's *Integration in Education — the way forward*, for the fuller story of this period). There would need to be a constant review and questioning that the school was doing the right thing by Kirsty and the right thing by all the other children on the roll.

For most of her time at the Maidenhead infants school no 'extra' resources were allocated by Berkshire LEA to the school for Kirsty, although within the school itself significant adjustments in attitudes, practice and expectations were made by the whole school community — staff, children and parents. It was never a matter of Kirsty having to fit into the school's existing structures and curriculum goals. Instead, her teachers had to ask themselves how best they could adapt their work programmes to meet Kirsty's needs, and how far they could do this without straining the resources of the school.

At one stage Kirsty, who had half an hour of speech therapy after school each week, was able to benefit by joining a small group of Asian children with a teacher of English as a second language. Later, towards the end of her time at the school, she received some withdrawal for individual teaching with the head.

By her fifth term in school and at the age of six and a half, Kirsty's achievements included knowing most of her numbers; writing her name with a little help; reading five word sentences from her *Kathy and Mark* reader with ease; a marked improvement in language development; a real understanding of what the teacher was saying; an ability to get herself around the school competently; a healthy appetite without any problems at school dinner time and, according to a teacher at the special school she would have attended, much more self-sufficiency than children of a similar age and ability at the special school.

The special school was asked if it felt Kirsty was losing out by not being there and firmly replied 'no'. Although pupil-teacher ratios were much better in the special school, Kirsty's interaction in the infants school and the chance to find greater independence in a wider variety of activities far outweighed the advantages of being in the special school.

But Kirsty was going to need extra help in her language development and in extending her ability to concentrate on her own work if she was to continue to progress so well in the infants and, later on, at junior school. To get that extra support, the school would need the back-up of a legal statement of Kirsty's special educational needs and the special provision that would hopefully be guaranteed in order to meet those needs. □

2 Assessment and statement

Until this point, all Kirsty's special educational needs had been met by the sheer determination and goodwill of the headteacher and her staff at the infants school and, before that, of her nursery. Throughout this time, say her parents, they put all their energies into backing-up and supporting this work, rather than dare test the waters outside the school and ask for extra provision from the LEA for fear of being refused: 'We were afraid to rock the boat. It is the same with so many parents in that situation — you are afraid to say anything in case the whole thing is taken away from you,' say David and Elizabeth Arrondelle.

But now there was no avoiding it. Everybody agreed that Kirsty would have to have extra support. An important step was to ensure that there was a mainstream school prepared to accept Kirsty. The Arrondelles had always believed it was essential to have the school behind them first, before discussing the details of how and when: 'We go to the headteacher first and say: "We have a daughter, Kirsty, with a special learning need — what do you think about it?" And if the answer is a straight no, then that is the end of it as far as that particular school is concerned. Because without goodwill you can't get anywhere. You can't legislate for goodwill.'

The headteacher of a local junior school, when approached about accepting Kirsty, said the same: 'Yes, we would be delighted to have her — subject to the statement and appropriate resources.' There was no alternative but to approach Berkshire LEA and ask for a formal assessment of Kirsty's special educational needs under the 1981 Education Act. 'We were very, very apprehensive about taking this step as all things appeared to point to a special school. But this was the only way we knew we could go forward at all — to face the challenge head-on and argue for resources in a mainstream school.'

Learning experience

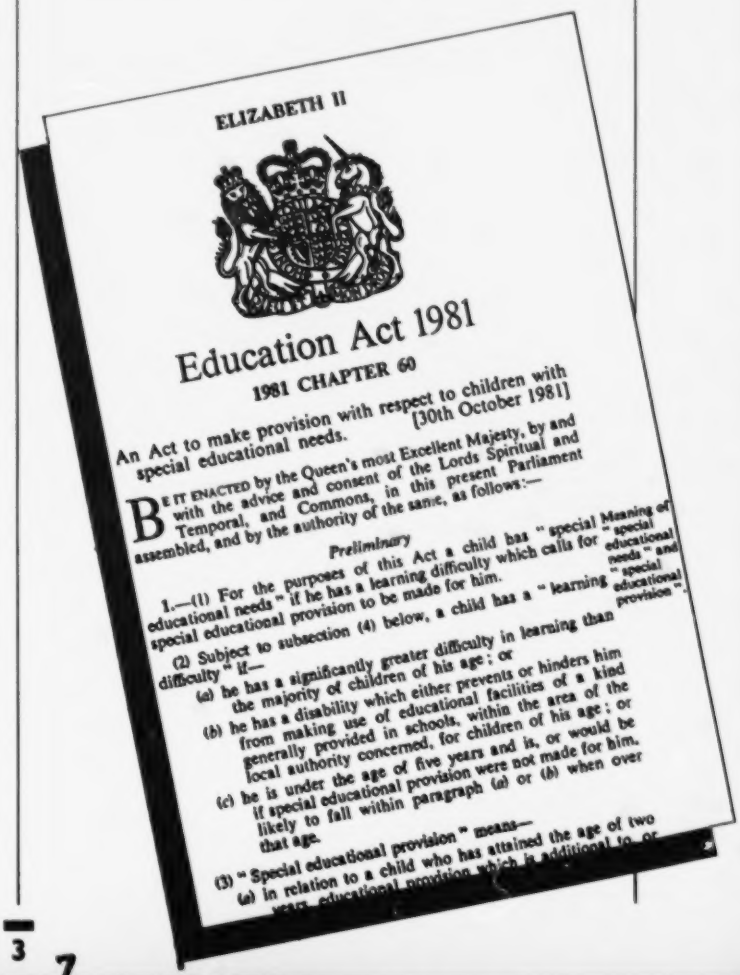
At the same time the Arrondelles could be confident that they did not have to face the challenge of arguing for mainstream support for Kirsty alone. They had the back-up of the infant headteacher's support, solid evidence of Kirsty's considerable achievements so far, and the guidance and support of an independent advocate who had advised and encouraged them throughout Kirsty's school career. Support which they say, made all the difference: 'Everybody is so ignorant of the issues — us, and the schools — however well-meaning. It is a learning experience for everybody. Having that extra support from an independent source behind us was vital.'

With the advocate's help the Arrondelles prepared a comprehensive range of evidence in support of their arguments for Kirsty's continued education in a mainstream setting. This included letters from Kirsty's playgroup leader, their local doctor, the chair of the school governors and other parents from the infant school, as well as their own submissions. These reports detailed not only the advantages to Kirsty of being in an ordinary school, but also benefits which the school and other children had received from her being there.

In addition, all the professionals involved in Kirsty's health and education made their own reports after assessing Kirsty's progress. It was these assessments and the multi-disciplinary meetings that her parents attended that they found the most daunting: 'To be in a small room with no windows and five professionals all lined up against you — you feel very threatened.' The Arrondelles did ask if they could be accompanied by their advocate on these occasions, and at first, Berkshire LEA refused. When they persisted, he was allowed to attend the second meeting they had with the LEA, provided he did not contribute.

'You just feel more confident having somebody else there with you. Even if they can't ask questions, you know you can always ask for a recess to discuss things. It's the moral support you need.'

However, the Arrondelles were not optimistic about the outcome. 'The feeling all along with Berkshire was that, yes they *had* the resources Kirsty needed, but they were in the special school. And that was that. All the conversations we had at county hall made that quite clear. They



ELIZABETH II

Education Act 1981

1981 CHAPTER 60

An Act to make provision with respect to children with special educational needs. [30th October 1981]

BE IT ENACTED by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

Preliminary

Meaning of "special educational needs" and "special educational provision".

1.—(1) For the purposes of this Act a child has "special educational needs" if he has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him.

(2) Subject to subsection (4) below, a child has a "learning difficulty" if—

(a) he has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age; or

(b) he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools, within the area of the local authority concerned, for children of his age; or

(c) he is under the age of five years and is, or would be if special educational provision were not made for him, likely to fall within paragraph (a) or (b) when over that age.

(3) "Special educational provision" means—

(a) in relation to a child who has attained the age of two years, educational provision which is additional to, or

went through all the get-out clauses in the Act in great detail, a very thinly-veiled message that the special school was where she would be going.'

All the Arrondelles' worst fears were confirmed when the draft statement finally came through. It was incomplete because the LEA had not specified which school Kirsty should go to and instead asked for another meeting to discuss the matter further with the Arrondelles and a team of educational psychologists. In addition, much of the language the report was couched in was negative, focussing on the difficulties Kirsty faced and ignoring her successes. 'We went back to them and pointed this out, we highlighted all the positive things said in the reports — and then they promptly denied they were significant!'

Constructive debate

The Arrondelles asked the authority if they would agree to go and visit the mainstream school that they wanted Kirsty to go to. In return, they said, they would visit the two special schools the LEA had identified. On that basis they could all have a much more constructive debate about the best school for Kirsty. 'That was what was so shattering. They hadn't really considered what alternatives to special schooling there could be!'

The first special school the Arrondelles were asked to visit was 12 miles from their home. It shared a campus with an ordinary primary school but there was no interaction between the two schools at all: 'The two heads had fallen out somewhere along the line and it was like the Berlin wall between them.' The headteacher at the second special school was more supportive and offered his expertise in helping to develop a special learning programme that Kirsty could follow in a mainstream school. But there was no guarantee that the LEA would accept that sort of compromise.

It took over a year from the time the Arrondelles had first initiated the assessment until delivery of the unfinished, draft statement. During that time Kirsty stayed on at the infants school, which everybody agreed would be to her advantage as it would give her time to consolidate her achievements before moving into a different environment. As a result of the assessments that were being done at the time, the school received extra help from a teacher for the hearing impaired: part of Kirsty's learning difficulties were due to a small hearing loss that had not previously been identified.

With hindsight the Arrondelles recognise that this extra support might have been forthcoming sooner had they sought an assessment earlier: 'We had all worked very well with Kirsty at her infants school — how much better might we have done, had we had this kind of extra help from the beginning! But there we are — we were too afraid to ask.' □

The Arrondelles

Street friends

3 A fresh start

Their feelings about a special school being the wrong environment for Kirsty were confirmed by the visits they had made; the Arrondelles felt they were in stalemate with their LEA. They were not prepared to give in at the first setback, but at the same time they did not feel confident enough to persuade the authority to change its practice to direct special educational resources towards supporting children with special needs in mainstream schools. Then an opportunity arose that would allow them to wipe the slate clean and start all over again.

David Arrondelle was offered a new position with his firm in Hertfordshire. It would mean a new house, a new school and a new authority. As they felt they were getting nowhere with Berkshire, it seemed a gamble worth taking.

Even before they moved into their new home in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, Elizabeth Arrondelle telephoned the headteacher of the local primary school to ask if she would consider accepting Kirsty on the roll. Within twenty-four hours she heard that the headteacher had discussed the matter with her staff and agreed to do so. 'In all our experience,' say the Arrondelles, 'there has not been one school we have visited or contacted with the prospect of including Kirsty on their role that hasn't said, "Yes, we'll have a go,".' Kirsty started attending the school in March 1985.

The headteacher of the school explained her response: 'My own personal philosophy regarding people is that one cannot lightly stand as arbiter in determining the limits of anyone's ability. One can, I feel, go on pushing forward, using everything at one's disposal to further a child's fulfilment. We agreed to take Kirsty because she was a child whom, like all other children, I hoped we could help reach towards her full potential. She was a child who, like all our other children, has particular needs. She was a child whose parents wished her to come to our school. Unless I felt we could not help her, I would not have refused her a place.'

Next the Arrondelles made themselves known informally to the education office in Hertford. They described the history of the Berkshire statement and the stalemate they had reached,

and asked for advice on how best to proceed in Hertfordshire. The response was immediate; Kirsty would receive 20 hours a week of welfare assistance in the mainstream school while a decision whether to re-assess her was being made. In the event, because the Berkshire statement, (which had been sent on to the new LEA), was now a year old, Hertfordshire decided to start from the beginning again.

The Arrondelles were happy with this decision, even though it meant going through the whole process of assessments and reports again. Their own evidence would stand, and they welcomed the opportunity to become fully involved in the decision-making process in their new authority. In addition they could add to their evidence a letter from Kirsty's infant headteacher to her new head in Hertfordshire. It read:

'I feel I must start my letter on a personal note, I do not think that in all my many years of teaching I have ever felt quite to sad as when Kirsty left this school last Wednesday. The way in which she has helped to enrich and educate the lives of the children, parents and teachers who have been in contact with her during her 3½ years with us is something none of us will ever forget ...'

Less threatening

The 1981 Act assessments were conducted in a very different manner, taking place in Kirsty's own home where she was more confident and better able to express herself. The Arrondelles found the whole process far less threatening. There was only one hiccup to the whole procedure when the Arrondelles found themselves in disagreement with their local hospital over the most appropriate treatment for Kirsty's hearing impairment. It conflicted with an earlier examination and diagnosis that said surgery would not be an appropriate treatment, and they wanted a second opinion. That second opinion was sought at the Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital in London, and confirmed the parents' view and the first diagnosis — but the specialist concerned took several long weeks to make his report, delaying the completion of the statement and causing some anxiety. 'It was an unforseen delay with no threatening implications — but because you do feel so vulnerable and you are on tenterhooks all the time, everything seems more serious than it really is,' say the Arrondelles.

In November, 1985, the draft statement from Hertfordshire LEA was ready. The statement itself is only three pages long giving:

- her educational needs described in three paragraphs;
- the special educational provision that the LEA proposes to make;
- the school she will go to; and
- additional non-educational provision that she should receive.

All the detailed medical and psychological reports, the headteacher's reports and parents' evidence are included in the appendices to the statement.

The Arrondelles sat down with their advocate and went through the document line by line. They agreed from the beginning that it was a 'reasonable' draft statement, but as it was a legal document, they wanted to see it 'fine-tuned to make it watertight' before the final statement was made.

Crossing bridges . . . ?

So far as the parents were concerned, it certainly said most of the right things, particularly that Kirsty should receive 'education in an ordinary primary school, where Kirsty can follow a modified curriculum and specific programmes with the benefit of supplementary school-based "home" tuition and additional welfare assistance appropriate to her particular educational needs.'

But the Arrondelles wanted to see the exact detail of that extra provision described. How many hours of 'home' tuition a week? How many hours of welfare assistance was considered to be appropriate, and how many sessions of speech therapy? In addition, the Arrondelles felt that a comment from the educational psychologist involved in the assessment that 'Kirsty's needs might be met by placement at a day special school' implied a threat that she might at any time be moved from her mainstream school.

Hertfordshire LEA responded positively to all the points raised. The final statement now makes specific reference to the details of hours described in the reports from the headteacher, speech therapist and psychologist in the appendices. The 'threatening' statement in the psychologist's report has not been deleted, but a letter explaining that it does not imply a threat of special school placement, is included.

The statement was received for their final approval on March 24, 1986, just over a year after the Arrondelles had moved to Hertfordshire. Kirsty was ten years old. □

4 Mainstream junior school

Much of Kirsty's statement under the 1981 Education Act simply confirmed the special educational provision that she was already receiving at her primary school under the direction of the headteacher.

The school is a junior mixed and infants (JMI) school of just under 250 pupils with semi open-plan, team-teaching classes. The infants area that Kirsty first went into is one large unit with up to 90 children in it, where the second and third year infants mixed equally between two teachers in vertically grouped classes.

When Kirsty first came to the school in Bishop's Stortford she was placed in a middle/top infant unit where she received a modified curriculum working alongside her classmates — at that time two or three years younger than Kirsty's chronological age. The headteacher, in collaboration with her class teacher and the welfare assistant, had worked out a detailed special education programme for Kirsty as soon as she started school. This has been adjusted and refined to keep pace with Kirsty's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development throughout her time at the school.

It became apparent over the months after she had started, that the balance between welfare support and some form of individual tuition needed to be considered. The addition of a 'home' tutor in school to work for four hours over three days a week was a major step forward. This provision, says the headteacher, gave Kirsty the individual attention for specific skills that she needed and which the class teacher alone had found difficult to provide given the needs of all the children in her care.

'Home' tutor

When Kirsty moved into the lower junior unit in September 1985 the 'home' tutor hours were raised to six hours a week (one hour and ten minutes daily), and this extra attention has been a significant factor in the progress that Kirsty has made at the school. The 'home' tutor is regarded as a resource for the whole class and is actively involved in group work for Kirsty and for any other children the class teachers feel would find it appropriate.

As the quality and span of Kirsty's concentration has improved, so she has spent more time in the classroom. The 'home' tutor's presence and work in the classroom is viewed by the school as essential for effective integration.

Kirsty has also benefitted by the team-teaching approach of the school, with its shared classrooms and a flexible, cross-curricula approach to work which has been able to identify and meet her special educational needs. In addition, the speech therapist visits the school two to three times per term and the 'home' tutor implements her recommendations.

Hertfordshire LEA's policy on special educational provision devolves decision-making and responsibility for individual cases as far as is reasonable and possible down to school level. There is no doubt that Kirsty's successful integration is due largely to the dedication and hard work of the headteacher and her staff and their whole-hearted commitment to the philosophy of integration. From the very beginning the Arrondelles found the school open and approachable and easily established a good relationship with the staff.

The head accepts that there are challenges and stresses on the school in facing this commitment. Strains which lie, she says, 'solely in the field of the mismatch of task to time'. Without careful discussion and adaptation of the mainstream curriculum between the class teacher, the headteacher and the 'home' tutor, and help from the welfare assistant, the school's philosophy of integration could not effectively be put into practice — 'even with the extra provision for Kirsty'. The school has not received any extra general resourcing to make up for this planning and preparation time, and this can cause frustration. 'The mismatch between the vision of integration and the effective, fair and realistic running of the school is, in human terms, very demanding,' says the head.

Kirsty has prizes for dog handling

Junior school classroom

The LEA itself is conscious of the pressures on headteachers and staff coping with these new situations. The education office says: 'This "first generation" of children being educated in mainstream schools is a learning experience for everybody. But good practice seeps through the system in a subtle way and a good school presented with the challenges of rising to a far greater range of needs than heretofore, will rise to the challenge.'

Rising to the challenge

In rising to the challenge so successfully, the school community has gained a great deal. The headteacher reports that the social benefits have been imperceptably absorbed. Kirsty's 'non-threatening presence' has been invaluable to the school. It has been used subtly by staff to help pupils accept potentially disabling special educational needs of others. The school's ethos of awareness, acceptance and friendship extends to all children; the school has also benefitted educationally from Kirsty's presence, 'because it has challenged our priorities, has forced us to "get a move on" in our thinking about some aspects of special needs and has guaranteed a greater rigour in our curriculum planning'.

Kirsty herself according to the head, has 'grown steadily and stably as a member of the school community and, as nearly as one can tell, she is working to potential, using a balanced and lively curriculum under the care of a very dedicated team of excellent teachers.'

Socially, Kirsty is developing in a very honest milieu. The headteacher says that children no longer play with her as they did when she was a young infant, 'just because she is handicapped and needs mothering.' She is now befriended or not on her own account and for what she truly gives of herself to the group.

'She is not shunned but she is — very rarely — teased. Her personality has been developing in a positive manner and this includes normal occasional disobedience or stubborness when, like other children, she will be reprimanded,' says the head. By growing up in the rough and tumble of an ordinary school, Kirsty is learning to face small battles every day rather than the one large battle she may have had to face later had

she been educated in a special school all her life.

In school, reports the headteacher, Kirsty is 'a warm friendly child who is blossoming with the opportunity to help her school and friends in general ways and through particular responsibilities.' Outside school Kirsty leads a thoroughly 'normal' life. She is a member of her local Brownie Pack where she is steadily adding to her collection of badges. For the last two years she has been away on Brownie summer camps where she has had to look after herself with a far greater degree of independence than she does at home.

Social life

She goes to regular swimming lessons, and enjoys a full social life amongst the children who live on her modern, private housing estate. The family travels to dog shows around the country, and all her life Kirsty has been used to meeting strangers in different places. She has entered numerous Junior Handling events at these shows with the family's two golden retrievers where she competes on equal terms with everyone else — and has a string of rosettes in her bedroom to show for it.

All the experiences her parents have introduced her to since her birth have helped Kirsty grow up into a confident and happy young girl. The Arrondelles are certain that integrated schooling has been a significant factor in her development.

With other parents of children with special educational needs they have helped to form a national network, called **81 Action**, offering support and advice to other families, as well as information about integrated education for their children. The Arrondelles are joint membership secretaries of **81 Action**, and in that capacity they have travelled extensively, nurturing new parent support groups, addressing conferences and supporting and advising individual parents.

They submitted their own detailed evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee looking at the implementation of the 1981 Education Act. They continue to champion integrated education and the rights of all parents to a *real* partnership with professionals in determining what kind of educational provision should be made for their child. □

5 A natural progression

Now that Kirsty is due to transfer to secondary school, her parents are facing their next 'struggle'. Hertfordshire LEA insists that it should not be seen as a battle. The same procedures and secondary transfer forms will be used for Kirsty as for any other child.

If Kirsty was schooled by her chronological age, she would have changed schools in September 1987. But since leaving Berkshire she has never been taught in her own age group. After discussion with her headteacher, it was decided that Kirsty should stay on at primary school for an extra year, and transfer in September 1988. But in the Autumn of 1987, the Arrondelles had to name a secondary school of their preference. Kirsty would need plenty of time to prepare for such a move. The secondary school she would go to would need to liaise closely with her primary school on a programme of work for her last year in the juniors.

Shortly before Easter 1987 Elizabeth Arrondelle telephoned her three local secondary schools in Bishop's Stortford and asked for an appointment to visit them. She used exactly the same approach as when choosing Kirsty's infant and junior school, clearly stating Kirsty's special

educational needs. All three schools responded by saying that they upheld the spirit of the 1981 Act but they could foresee there might be problems.

One of the three schools she visited seemed to focus only on the problems that they thought might arise, describing in detail the journey that Kirsty would have to make several times a day between different classes 'as if it were an army obstacle course' says Elizabeth Arrondelle. That school was quickly crossed off the list.

The Arrondelles argue against this kind of obstruction saying the onus should never be on the individual *child* to prove herself up to the school, but on the *school* to prove itself capable and willing to respond to the young person's needs.

The quality of response by a comprehensive school will be a major issue affecting Kirsty's education, they add. The LEA agrees: 'The particular challenges everybody will face include the size of the school — compared to the primary school — the need for students to regularly change rooms for different periods, and a curriculum run along individual subject disciplines.'

The child-centred, cross-curricula approach of Kirsty's primary school is ideal for Kirsty's needs. The modified curriculum does not diverge from the objectives or methods applied across the whole school. At secondary school, say her parents, Kirsty will continue to need a modified curriculum — something that will be an extension of her individualised learning programme at primary school. They realise that the difference between this and the essentially examination-dominated curriculum at the secondary school is going to be much more marked.

'Between God and Mary Warnock'

The Arrondelles do not under-estimate the issues and were prepared to talk frankly about them in each comprehensive school they visited. Two of the schools acknowledged the challenges they would have to face, but did not make them appear insuperable. The most positive response came from the headteacher of a Catholic mixed comprehensive who said: 'Let's face it, we are a Christian organisation and we are a comprehensive school and if, between God and Mary Warnock, we can't make it work, then who can!'

After deciding firmly in favour of the Catholic school the Arrondelles wrote asking if they could visit, as a family, before finally making up their minds.

All three were shown around by the head of the first year who explained the school routine to them and took copious notes about Kirsty's special needs. The Arrondelles felt she was 'obviously thinking ahead all the time, saying things like, "Oh well, we'll have to see that she sits in the front of the class because of the hearing loss," and things like that. It was a very positive approach.'

While there the headteacher gave them an application form for the school, saying it would be better to fill it in early in their case.

In the meantime, Kirsty's primary school

carried out the regular annual review of Kirsty's progress and provision, as required under the 1981 Act. In June 1987 her parents attended a multi-disciplinary meeting at the school with the headteacher, Kirsty's class-teacher, her class-teacher for next year, the 'home' tutor, chief speech therapist and the school doctor. The work of the past year was discussed, using a half-termly wall-chart kept by the 'home' tutor, class-teacher and speech therapist.

Kirsty's individualised learning programme for maths and language and speech therapy has integrated her work with classroom activities whenever this has been of mutual benefit. The year has built upon work previously done, and everybody agreed that without the 'home' tutor and welfare assistant, Kirsty would not have gained as much as she had. The Arrondelles felt Kirsty was progressing at a very satisfactory rate; she was gaining so much from the good images of the other children around her. Her hearing loss, they said, was a fact of life.

At the review meeting the Arrondelles made it clear that they wanted Kirsty to transfer to the Catholic comprehensive school in September 1988. The headteacher warned that although the comprehensive school head was in favour, they should not take it for granted that Kirsty would automatically go there. It is a warning that her parents have taken to heart: 'We won't assume anything — not until she is home and dry!'

Whatever school she goes to, the period leading up to transfer will be a vital preparation for Kirsty: regular visits to the secondary school will be needed to help her get used to it and Kirsty must be prepared for greater independence, including getting herself around the town.

Everyone involved agreed she would need help in understanding the language and behaviour of teenage children. Although the daily one hour and ten minutes of individualised teaching will continue to be the pivot of Kirsty's learning, the emphasis over the coming year will need to be one of adjustment and a greater social awareness, with academic skills being perhaps less important than life skills.

The LEA acknowledges the importance of preparation and close liaison between the two schools involved and says it will take up Kirsty's review in the Autumn. 'The real issue,' adds the authority, 'is the quality of the relationship that has been built up between the advisory teacher for special needs and the educational psychologist, and between the two head teachers involved. These are four key figures in any successful integration provision.'

'From the outset,' say the Arrondelles, 'it was our instinct which told us to help Kirsty live as full a life in society as any child. Our view was that this could be achieved via a mainstream education and her taking part in activities that other children would enjoy and would find stimulating. Her successful integration at school has been achieved with the help and goodwill of the school staff, her schoolmates and county hall. With their continued help throughout her secondary school career, Kirsty will be able to live an independent life and be a contributing member of society.' □□

INTEGRATION
IN EDUCATION

Kirsty Arrondelle's successful placement in mainstream primary school is a tribute to the determination of her parents and the goodwill and enthusiasm of various professionals and administrators involved.

CSIE's earlier factsheet, Kirsty–the struggle for a place in an ordinary school, covered her first few years in playgroup and local infants school. This new publication continues the story through primary school in greater depth and shows how Kirsty is not the only one to have benefitted from integration.

£1.00